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rail travel newsletter

30¢

VOL. 4 NO. 18
SECOND ISSUE OF
SEPTEMBER 1974
#92

LETTERS

Your comments on bus design in the last issue were provoking. As coordinator of a Project for improving transit in Berkeley, I have been the recipient of community reaction to transit vehicles, and would like to add a few observations.

Since the first signs of a transit renaissance, the GMC style of bus has been the only transit vehicle readily available to those people wishing to increase the importance of transit. This limitation has worked as a severe handicap upon an already difficult task, and has undoubtedly held back the development of transit.

In Berkeley, the AC Transit bus (GMC style) is disliked to varying degrees of intensity by just about all segments of the community, in spite of the generally favorable opinion people have of AC Transit as an agency. As a consequence, the task of generating enthusiasm for expanded transit services is next to impossible. The best that can be done is to appeal to people's sense of duty for developing an alternative to the automobile (Berkeleyans are sensitive to increased auto usage). This approach has resulted in some support for improved transit, but people's hearts are not really in their efforts. However, I have noted that by proposing light rapid transit (modern streetcars--see Glenn Lee's article, last issue) for some routes, and small buses for others, we have changed the popular apathy for transit to enthusiastic support from various and diverse parts of the city. It appears that transit vehicle design does play a large part in the public's acceptance of expanded transit.

What is wrong with the GM bus? You hit the nail on the head with your comments on noise and exhaust, with emphasis on the former. I encountered a number of Berkeleyans who wanted the AC Transit strike to continue so that the noisy buses would not return to the streets. Other people were more responsible, but they did not appreciate the noise either. Furthermore, proposals for putting buses on streets (even arterials) where they do not now run generate fierce opposition, again primarily because of the noise the GM bus produces.

Bulk is another problem. People do not like the size of the GM bus, particularly on narrow residential streets. However, the size of a modern streetcar does not generate the same response. Perhaps the real source of irritation is style--the functional elegance of a modern streetcar or German city bus contrasted to the Buck Rogers schmaltz of the GM bus. The tremendous rectangular windows, extending from eye level of standing passengers to chest level of seated passengers, evident on both modern streetcars and German-style city buses, together with their 4-plus foot wide doors, lend their exterior an air of lightness, openness and human activity which are not suggested by the constricted appearance of the GM bus. The noise generated in accelerating a loaded GM bus, and its sluggish, lumbering response may be other factors which people don't like, and which they may subconsciously translate into a dislike of bulk.

The most offending interior feature of the GM bus is the constriction of the front and rear doors. This makes boarding and alighting difficult and results in a claustrophobic interior. The door arrangement on the GM bus may cause many short distance travelers and those with packages to avoid the bus because worry about the logistics of getting on, and particularly off, constitutes a major part of the stress in making short distance transit trips. The constricted doors also affect operations of the GM bus by making service very slow on routes where passengers continually board and alight--i.e., the type of service which is really useful to the most people...

The ridiculous window arrangement, upon which you commented, is also a drawback

(continued on page 19)

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Mailing date of this issue: September 27, 1974.

ON THE COVER:

Powered by a single Penn Central engine, the BLUE WATER leaves Chicago on its first revenue run Sunday, Sept. 15. Photo by Jack Ferry. Below, the date is Sept. 14, and transbay services are being inaugurated on BART. Seen at the Oakland West station, the first V.I.P. train has just crossed the bay from San Francisco and heads down the line toward Coliseum station as passengers await the first revenue run. Photo by Message Media.

In this issue we take you on four train rides, on new and nearly-new trains. On page 5 begins coverage of the first BART transbay runs. On page 13 Jack Ferry describes the inaugural run of Amtrak's BLUE WATER. On page 8 begin two Turbo rides, both French and American types.

Next issue, which you surely won't want to miss, we plan phantastic coverage of the first run of Amtrak's LAS VEGAS CELEBRITY TRAIN, from inside and outside, with entrancing photos by Paul Rayton and Peter Bretz, and narrative by Peter Bretz. Also, more on the Rail Canada plan. Do be with us.

ANOTHER COAST STARLIGHT DERAILMENT

The southbound COAST STARLIGHT that left Seattle Sept. 20 derailed 26 miles north of Redding, CA at 3:55am on Sept. 21. The entire 11-car, 2-engine train, except for the last car, left the tracks but remained upright. There were 227 people aboard, and the number of injuries, all minor, varied in different reports from 3 to 17. The train was traveling at 62mph when it left the rails. There was no immediate explanation for the accident, but several crewmen told newsmen that an expansion of rails could have caused it. Passengers were bused on, and the two STARLIGHTS leaving their endpoints on Sept. 21 were delayed several hours until the track could be cleared and repaired.

THE BAD TRACK PROBLEM AND AMTRAK'S IMPROVEMENT PLANS

The Federal Railroad Administration let out the word this month that everyone had guessed already--that derailments due to bad track have sharply increased recently. In 1973, over 7,000 trains derailed in the U.S., a 27% increase over 1972. The FRA said 47% of these were caused by defective track, and 23% due to aging equipment. For the first 4 months of 1974, derailments were up another 15%. The FRA said that Amtrak has had 26 derailments this year (not counting the COAST STARLIGHT incident described above). Amtrak's plan to counter this dangerous trend lies in its proposed $200 million-per-year track improvement plan, part of its 5-year plan reported on in the last issue. On page 4 we present a breakdown of Amtrak's plans for spending this track improvement money and the possible speeds obtainable on the various routes. (Source: Congressional Record, 9/12)

Additional information has become available to RTN on Amtrak's planned equipment purchases, partly included in the 5-year plan: of the 457 Metroliner-type cars on order (described earlier as 200 single-level cars plus 257 Metro-type cars), only 57 are to be assigned to the Northeast Corridor, with 304 assigned to long-distance "tunnel-restricted" routes, and the remaining 96 for overflow and protection. Of these cars, 61 will be sleepers and 87 food-service cars (i.e., snack-bar, lounge or diner). The 100 Turbo cars will go on these routes: Boston-Philadelphia, Chicago-Detroit, Chicago-St. Louis, and New York-Buffalo. The 235 bi-level cars will be ordered immediately, instead of waiting until Fiscal 1976, as was planned earlier. This distribution of equipment will give 157 new cars for corridor and short-distance service, 539 for long distance, and 96 for overflow & protection, an allocation conforming closely to the actual percentages of revenue passenger miles (see RTN, 2nd Aug. Issue, p. 23). The first bi-levels will be delivered in Fiscal 1977, for the Bicentennial year, and will be placed on the FLORIDIAN. In Fiscal 1978 bi-levels will go on the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR, COAST STARLIGHT and PANAMA LIMITED, and will permit the SUNSET to begin daily operation. The next year will see their use extended to both Chicago-Seattle routes.

NRPC CAPITAL PLAN—RIGHT-OF-WAY

[Dollars in thousands[1]]

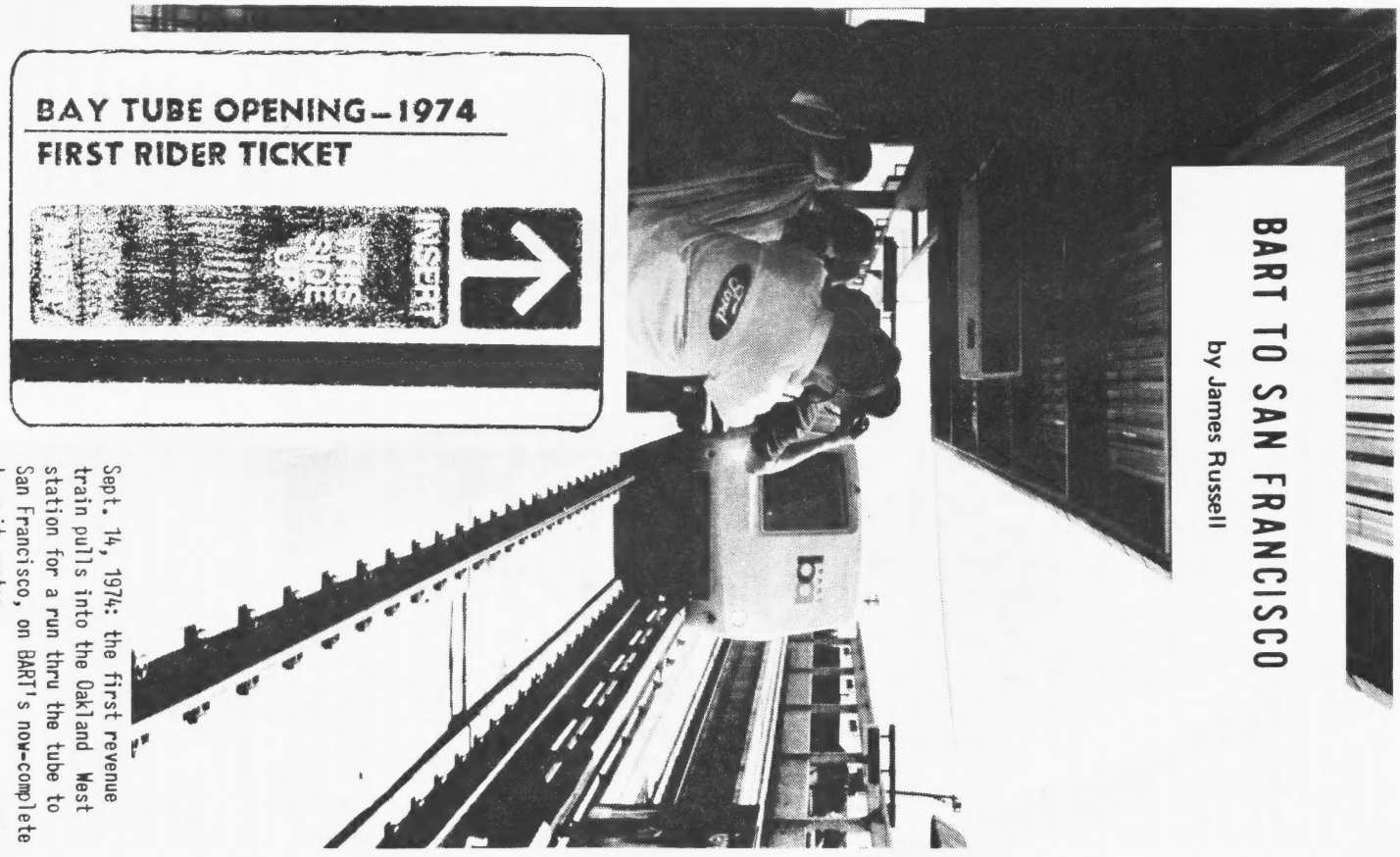
Right-of-way	New capital project requests	Amounts inc. 1974 and prior plan	Net new capital requests				
			1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Northeast corridor	$290,000		$65,000	$65,000	$60,000	$50,000	$50,000
Chicago Carbondale	85,000		10,000	15,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Philadelphia Harrisburg [1]	45,000			20,000	25,000		
Washington-Richmond [1]	55,000			25,000	30,000		
Chicago Detroit	85,000		10,000	15,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Chicago-Quincy [1]	40,000				20,000	20,000	
Chicago St. Louis	135,000		20,000	25,000	30,000	30,000	30,000
Chicago Milwaukee	85,000		10,000	15,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Seattle Portland [1]	55,000				15,000	20,000	20,000
Los Angeles San Diego	90,000		10,000	15,000	20,000	20,000	25,000
Chicago Indianapolis-Cincinnati	135,000		20,000	25,000	30,000	30,000	30,000
New York Buffalo	90,000		15,000	15,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Other	700	$700					
Subtotal	[2] 1,190,700	700	[3] 160,000	[2] 235,000	310,000	250,000	235,000

[1] Additional Amtrak funding may be required on these routes.
[2] The board of directors approved submission of a capital grant request of $200,000,000 in fiscal year 1976 to fund fiscal year 1975 program and partially fund fiscal year 1976 program.

NRPC CAPITAL PLAN

[Dollar amounts in millions]

Route corridors	Marketing departmental priority	Expenditure	Track miles	Current speed (miles per hour)	Possible speed (miles per hour)	Route corridors	Marketing departmental priority	Expenditure	Track miles	Current speed (miles per hour)	Possible speed (miles per hour)
Washington-Boston	2	$290	1,030	65.0	110	Chicago-Milwaukee	8	$85	170	55.5	110
Chicago-Carbondale	9	85	620	58.0	90	Seattle-Portland	11	55	372	50.0	79
Philadelphia-Harrisburg	10	45	206	59.0	80	Los Angeles-San Diego	5	90	256	50.0	90
Washington-Richmond	7	55	376	50.0	65	Chicago-Indiana-Cincinnati	6	135	427	30.0	90
Chicago-Detroit	1	85	425	49.0	110	New York-Buffalo	3	90	872	51.0	90
Chicago-Quincy	12	40	524	55.0	80						
Chicago-St. Louis	4	135	568	57.0	110	Total		1,190			



BART TO SAN FRANCISCO

by James Russell

Sept. 14, 1974: the first revenue train pulls into the Oakland West station for a run thru the tube to San Francisco, on BART's now-complete transit system.

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Chicago-Detroit	85,000	----------	10,000	15,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Chicago-Quincy [1]	40,000	----------	----------	----------	20,000	20,000	----------
Chicago-St. Louis	135,000	----------	20,000	25,000	30,000	30,000	30,000
Chicago-Milwaukee	85,000	----------	10,000	15,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Seattle-Portland [1]	55,000	----------	----------	----------	15,000	20,000	20,000
Los Angeles-San Diego	90,000	----------	10,000	15,000	20,000	20,000	25,000
Chicago-Indianapolis-Cincinnati	135,000	----------	20,000	25,000	30,000	30,000	30,000
New York-Buffalo	90,000	----------	15,000	15,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
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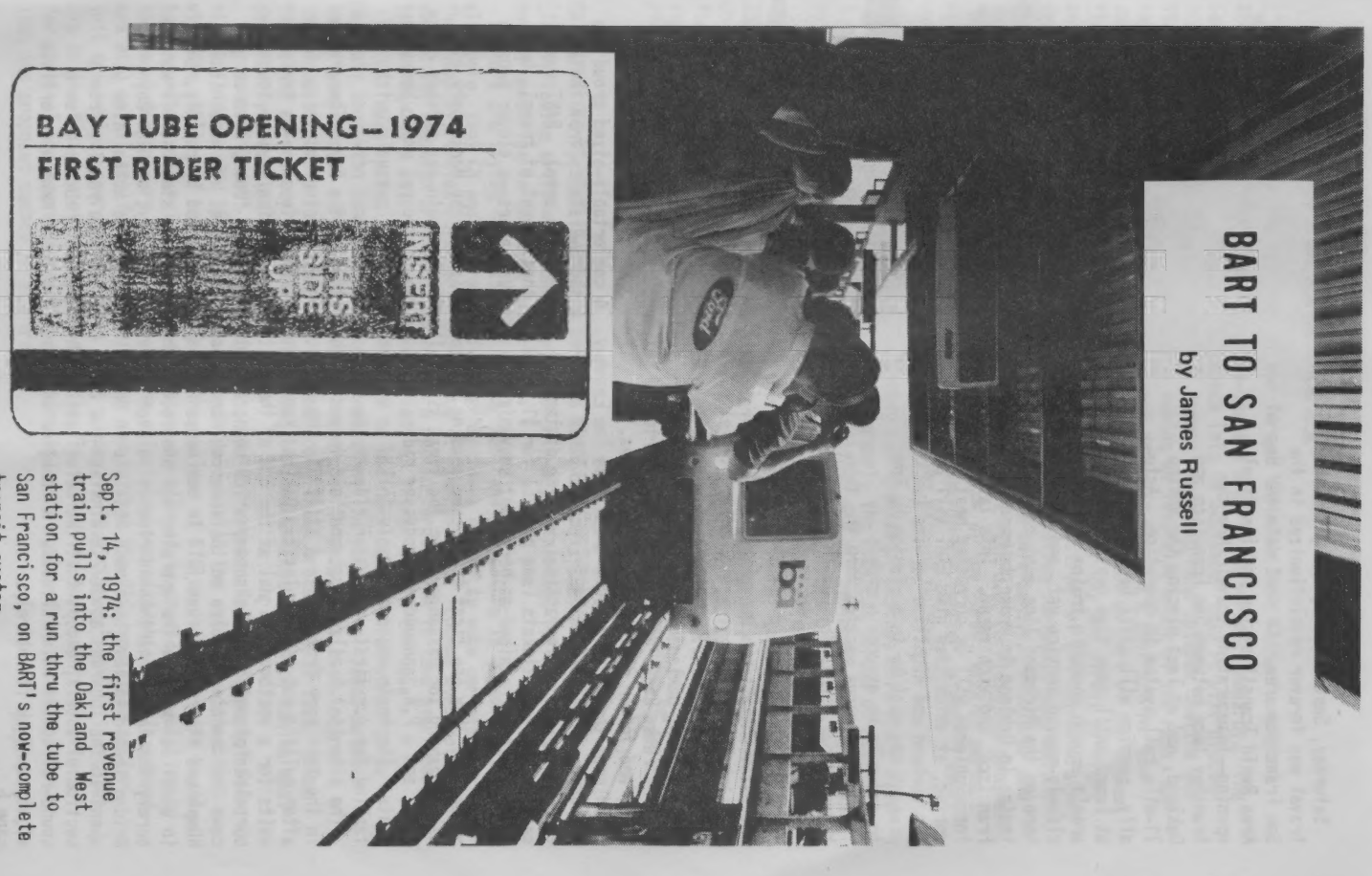


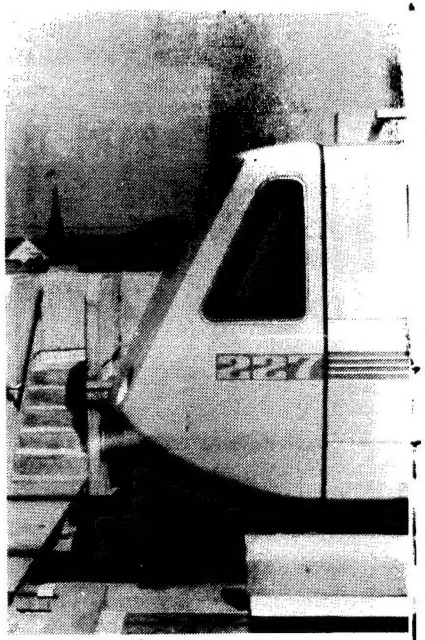
BART TO SAN FRANCISCO

by James Russell

Sept. 14, 1974: the first revenue train pulls into the Oakland West station for a run thru the tube to San Francisco, on BART's now-complete transit system.

Saturday, September 14, 1974, transbay travel was forever revolutionized in the San Francisco area. On that date the Bay Area Rapid Transit system had its final opening--inaugurating travel thru the transbay tube between San Francisco and Oakland, and at last placing the entire 71-mile rail system in operation. Actually, service will still be restricted at least until some time next year: there aren't enough operable trains for very closely-spaced service yet, and riders here on the Richmond line must change trains in Oakland in order to reach San Francisco, and vice versa. This latter inconvenience will be corrected next spring, at which time also BART will begin weekend and nighttime service (at present one must be in a station by 8pm in order to be assured a ride).

Regular revenue service thru the tube began Monday, Sept. 16, but the Saturday occasion was a special event to allow first-day riders to try out the service.



Only stations between Montgomery St., San Francisco, and Coliseum station, Oakland operated for the occasion.

More than 1000 invited dignitaries first rode the trains, starting at Lake Merritt station, Oakland, where BART's headquarters is located. Among the guests were Mayor Abraham Beame of New York, John Hirten of the Urban Mass Transit Administration, and former BART manager B.R. Stokes.

RTN rode the first revenue train from the Eastbay. A comfortably-sized crowd was gathered at the Oakland West (West Oakland) station, a short distance from the Amtrak depot (tho an impractical walking distance in a high-crime area). BART was selling souvenir tickets (see page 5) for $1, good for that amount of travel, but probably to be retained as permanent souvenirs by most purchasers--a clever money-maker.

About 12:30pm the first train came heading in from Coliseum, the Montgomery signals flashing for passengers for the first time. The 10-car train was already quite full, and a P.A. announcement advised riders to enter the last cars, which had some seats. The train was comfortably filled as we took off in BART's usualy quick fashion for our first underwater ride to the City.

The tube is 3.6 miles long, and laid in mud on the bottom of the bay. The grades in the tube vary from .3% to a stiff 3%, tho riders aren't conscious of this. Soon after pulling out of the elevated Oakland West station (see photo above--a train waits for a westbound signal at the end of the platform on opening day) we found ourselves plunging into a subway which connects with the tube. "Down, down we go!" came the operator's voice on the intercom, and passengers smiled. We were hitting 80mph and the pressure was felt in our ears. Tube lights flashed by rapidly, and in about 3.5 minutes the operator was announcing the Montgomery station. It was surely the fastest earthbound ride we've ever had across the bay, and the Bay Bridge seemed to have been made obsolete in one fell swoop. The actual time we spent in the tube was about 2.5 minutes--you can't tell the tube readily from a section of subway, except that the noise level is higher, due probably to more sound-reflective material used. A commuter engrosed in a short newspaper article might overlook it entirely.

Canadian Rail

("Canadian Rail" is the new name of our former "Canadian News Letter" section)

THE PRIME TOURIST trip of the Victoria-Seattle area is in serious jeopardy. The Canadian Pacific was expected to announce late in September that it will discontinue the famous "Princess Marguerite" summer steamship runs between Seattle and Victoria, B.C. CP has confirmed it is making an intensive study of the runs, and has asked the Port of Seattle for a 6-week delay in signing a contract for new facilities at Pier 66. The service was inaugurated in 1904 as part of the famous "Triangle Run" which included Vancouver (via Victoria by day and direct by night boat). CP advertised a reduced fare for "midweek reduction" of $11 day-excursion, down from $14, but the rate was clearly for market testing purposes, good only 4 days, the last 2 Wednesdays and Thursdays of service this season. Should CP end the runs, future operation possibilities would rest with B.C. Ferries, the proposed "Rail Canada," the U.S. Amtrak, or some combination of the three, with CP perhaps retained as contractor for the runs. As predicted in RTN earlier, almost 5 weeks were cut from the season from the original ending date of October 31.

CN AND CP are both experiencing increasing rail passenger busines sthis year, according to a report from Statistics Canada (formerly the Dominion Bureau of Statistics). A CN spokesman said the rising price of gasoline, and new equipment on some runs may have helped. Montreal-Toronto is up 8% over last year, spurred by successful Turbo operation; while Toronto-Windsor business is up 15%, helped by added trips. Turbo has helped greatly on the Montreal-Ottawa route: boardings in Montreal rose 25%, and in Ottawa 6%. Transcontinental loadings are unchanged, and Maritimes are down 6%. CN gave no explanation for the latter, altho sharply reduced consists on the SCOTIAN, OCEAN LIMITED and CHALEUR runs, whittled from larger trains a few years ago, may be responsible. Auto trips between Canada and U.S. are down, and public transport has registered gains in all modes across the border, SC said.

CN + CP + CTC VS. RAIL CANADA: A VIEWER'S GUIDE TO THE EMERGING BATTLE

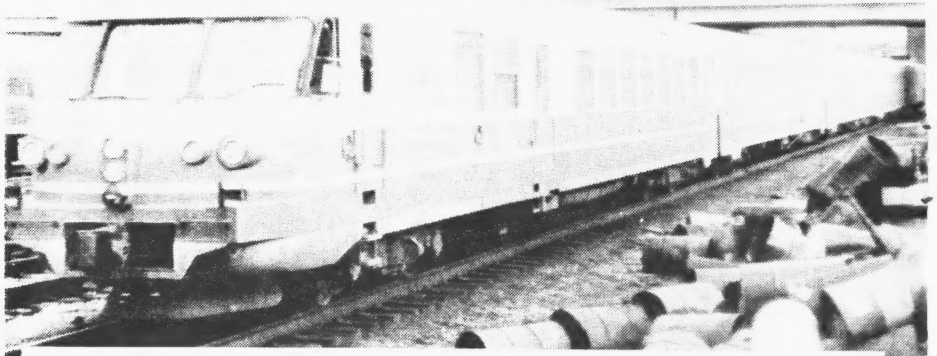
(The following article, by an anonymous highly-placed person, is in 2 parts, the second appearing in the next issue:)

Rumours are flying in certain Ottawa circles, and conjecture is growing daily elsewhere, that CN and CP are girding for battle--a battle to make certain that the recently re-elected Liberal government of Pierre-Elliot Trudeau does not deliver on its campaign promise to establish a public corporation to take over operation of Canada's intercity passenger trains, as Amtrak has in the U.S.

The railways' principal ally could well be the very agency which purports to regulate them--the Canadian Transport Commission. An informal alliance between these two powerful corporations and their overseer to defeat the best interests of the Canadian people is neither far-fetched nor without precedent; in fact, given the record of railway regulation in Canada, it is the situation which can be most confidently predicted to occur.

In common with most regulatory agencies, the CTC and its Railway Transport Committee is dominated by people whose sympathies are with the railways rather than with the public, if one is to judge by the pattern of RTC decisions and the resultant standard of service which the railways are allowed to provide. Regulation by the regulated appears to be the governing principle--one with which American readers will be all too familiar. The danger now is that the RTC, unwilling to forfeit its railway prerogatives to a rival agency--a "Rail Canada" having its genesis in the Ministry of Transport--might easily follow its bureaucratic instinct for survival and aggrandisement and combine with the railways in an attempt to stop the proposed agency in its tracks.

Two Turbo Tales



I: Franco-American Turbo

BY LOWELL CLUCAS

Photo by Jack Ferry: Amtrak Turboliner in Chicago

WHERE ARE THEY NOW? The following Amtrak locomotives are presently in storage at Wildwood, Florida: Nos. 219, 234, 245, 254, 237, 371, 456, 231, 209, 218, 239, 252, 230, 240, 235, 238, 241, 243, 223, 467, 466, 374, 463, 250, and 469. NOW BEING RECONDITIONED and refurbished at Seaboard Coast Lines shop at Rocky Mount are the following Amtrak cars: Nos. 4410, 4411, 4413, 4417, 4424, 4428, 4433, 4434, 4435, 4439, 4458, and 4560. Also nos. 1590, 2635, 3222, 5254, 5427, 3402, 8009, 5410, 2792, and 1076, all of which are cars that were involved in the SILVER STAR derailment of Aug. 12 (see RTN, Second August issue)..... IN JACKSON, MICHIGAN recently were Amtrak officials inspecting rail facilities for the upcoming Jackson-Detroit commuter service, which will replace the existing Ann Arbor-Detroit service run by the Penn Central. State officials are hoping that trains will be running in October. The train will be locomotive-hauled and will carry from 2 to 4 coaches..... CONTINENTAL TRAILWAYS BUS president T. S. Reece, 65, who retired last June after heading the bus company since 1966, died on Sept. 20 after a brief illness, in Dallas, TX. When Continental Trailways was still the Santa Fe Trails Bus System, Reece was its youngest traffic director at one time..... A STRIKE OF National Airlines, as of Sept. 18, was still in effect, after about 3 months, probably helping Amtrak ridership, especially on the New York-Florida route..... THE CLEVELAND TRAIN (Chicago-Boston), announced as an Amtrak experimental route by the DOT last summer, will not begin before spring at the earliest, Amtrak said Sept. 13. Reasons given were track conditions and a decision to be made over whether to build a new Cleveland station or use the old one.....

About 90 of us were standing at the gate when the Turbo pulled in slowly and quietly for our 7:45 a.m. departure, the train's sleek profile and red, white and blue Amtrak livery openly clashing with the general decay of the concourse and shed of St. Louis Union Station. At the direction of an Amtrak representative we all filed into the last three cars. The two front cars, including the head end turbine unit, were saved for passengers who boarded along the way. The Turbo's capacity is 280 people. Later, over coffee in the buffet car, the ICG conductor and trainman said it wasn't a bad load for a Tuesday morning.

Settling into a section of facing seats, I was immediately impressed by the brightness of the car interior, helped by the exceptionally wide windows with light side curtains. The central corridor led through a glass partition in the middle of the car which divided the passenger space into two large compartments. In addition to the individual sections, there were rows of seats facing backward and forward, all anchored to the carpeted floor, the usual configuration of multiple-unit trains in Britain and Western Europe.

The Turbo began an easy roll out of the train shed, sliding under the rusted span of a long dead signal gantry into the sunlight of the yard. From inside the train there was no engine noise. We traveled slowly north of St. Louis, crossed the bridge over the Mississippi into Illinois, and on the way into Alton lurched from side to side on a few miles of rough Penn Central track. At Alton, the first stop, we moved onto the former main line of the GM&O. From this point north the track was cleared for 100 mph. The Turbo was now able to show some of its stuff and soon was riding steadily and comfortably alongside Interstate 55 at 80 plus, passing every rubber-tired vehicle in sight.

Satisfied that the Turbo was in good hands up ahead, I went to the buffet car for breakfast. The buffet section took care of 24 people at six tables, with normal passenger seating in the rest of the car. This was strictly airline cuisine, economy class. I selected a tray of pre-cooked bacon and eggs from a glass cabinet, handing it to a red-jacketed Amtrak attendant who heated the food in a microwave oven. The service lacked the dash of the diner on the BROADWAY LIMITED the next morning. But it seemed adequate if you consider the limitations of providing hot meals on a five-car unit train. Furthermore the eggs were good, the coffee fine, and the bill modest.

After breakfast I took a walk through the train but noted few on-board traces of the Turbo's Gallic origins. On the back of each seat there was a small net for storing personal items en route, not a convenience found in the average American coach. French words have been replaced with English, although "Securite" appears on the main exit doors (denoting that the glass is shatter-proof). The soap dispensers in the washrooms, at least the one I checked, carried the initials "SNCF" of the French National Railways. But that was about it. The new trainsets will be even more Americanized and in time the casual traveler may not recognize them as imported products.

I returned to the buffet car for another cup of coffee and sat down with the Turbo's conductor and trainman as they relaxed between stops. Both were railroaders of more than 30 years' experience and recent alumni of the GM&O. They had found the train difficult to work at first, they said, mainly because they weren't familiar with it. But they liked the Turbo now and felt the passengers did too.

"They run this train with a crew of three in France, " the conductor told me. "We have seven men on here today, the operating crew of four and three with Amtrak. In France, they don't check tickets on the train the way we do. Over there you turn your ticket in at your destination. They don't use firemen either, but they have a much more protected right-of-way. With all our crossings we have to be on the lookout all the time."

Because I had heard that Turbo passengers had objected to riding backward when all the forward seats were taken, I had asked whether this was still a customer relations problem.

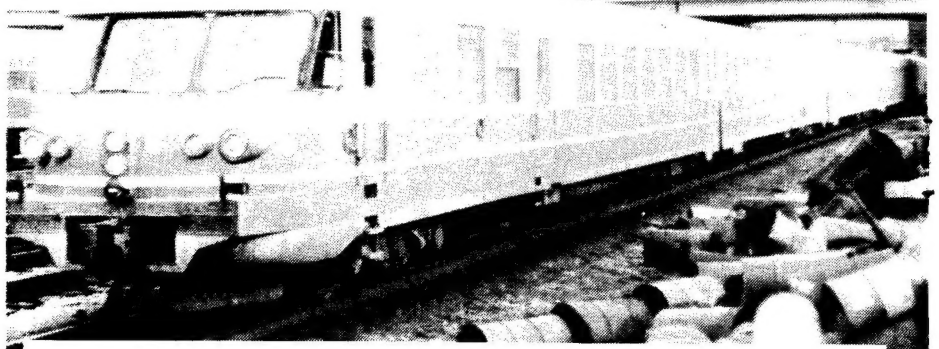
"Not now," they said. "Everybody seems to be used to it. It won't make much difference in the future anyway. The new trains coming over will just be shells. American reversible seats will be installed when they get here. The doors between the cars are also pretty stiff. We think that can be taken care of in the new equipment."

Both men said they had to stretch Amtrak's passenger rules on occasion. For example, the book says that no standees or metal backpacks are allowed on the Turbos.

"We just can't leave a lot of kids with backpacks on the platform in Chicago, so we take them along. It doesn't hurt the train any," they said. "As for standees, what do you do if you're the last train out and all the seats are taken? We squeeze them in. We don't leave anybody behind if we can help it."

Shortly before our arrival in Springfield (on time at 9:16 am) they left to look after passengers leaving or boarding the train at the state capital and I

Two Turbo Tales



I: Franco-American Turbo

BY LOWELL CLUCAS

Photo by Jack Ferry: Amtrak Turboliner in Chicago

WHERE ARE THEY NOW? The following Amtrak locomotives are presently in storage at Wildwood, Florida: Nos. 219, 234, 245, 254, 237, 371, 456, 231, 209, 218, 239, 252, 230, 240, 235, 238, 241, 243, 223, 467, 466, 374, 463, 250, and 469. NOW BEING RECONDITIONED and refurbished at Seaboard Coast Lines shop at Rocky Mount are the following Amtrak cars: Nos. 4410, 4411, 4413, 4417, 4424, 4428, 4433, 4434, 4435, 4439, 4458, and 4560. Also nos. 1590, 2635, 3222, 5254, 5427, 3402, 8009, 5410, 2792, and 1076, all of which are cars that were involved in the SILVER STAR derailment of Aug. 12 (see RTN, Second August issue)..... IN JACKSON, MICHIGAN recently were Amtrak officials inspecting rail facilities for the upcoming Jackson-Detroit commuter service, which will replace the existing Ann Arbor-Detroit service run by the Penn Central. State officials are hoping that trains will be running in October. The train will be locomotive-hauled and will carry from 2 to 4 coaches..... CONTINENTAL TRAILWAYS BUS president T. S. Reece, 65, who retired last June after heading the bus company since 1966, died on Sept. 20 after a brief illness, in Dallas, TX. When Continental Trailways was still the Santa Fe Trails Bus System, Reece was its youngest traffic director at one time..... A STRIKE OF National Airlines, as of Sept. 18, was still in effect, after about 3 months, probably helping Amtrak ridership, especially on the New York-Florida route..... THE CLEVELAND TRAIN (Chicago-Boston), announced as an Amtrak experimental route by the DOT last summer, will not begin before spring at the earliest, Amtrak said Sept. 13. Reasons given were track conditions and a decision to be made over whether to build a new Cleveland station or use the old one.....

About 90 of us were standing at the gate when the Turbo pulled in slowly and quietly for our 7:45 a.m. departure, the train's sleek profile and red, white and blue Amtrak livery openly clashing with the general decay of the concourse and shed of St. Louis Union Station. At the direction of an Amtrak representative we all filed into the last three cars. The two front cars, including the head end turbine unit, were saved for passengers who boarded along the way. The Turbo's capacity is 280 people. Later, over coffee in the buffet car, the ICG conductor and trainman said it wasn't a bad load for a Tuesday morning.

Settling into a section of facing seats, I was immediately impressed by the brightness of the car interior, helped by the exceptionally wide windows with light side curtains. The central corridor led through a glass partition in the middle of the car which divided the passenger space into two large compartments. In addition to the individual sections, there were rows of seats facing backward and forward, all anchored to the carpeted floor, the usual configuration of multiple-unit trains in Britain and Western Europe.

The Turbo began an easy roll out of the train shed, sliding under the rusted span of a long dead signal gantry into the sunlight of the yard. From inside the train there was no engine noise. We traveled slowly north of St. Louis, crossed the bridge over the Mississippi into Illinois, and on the way into Alton lurched from side to side on a few miles of rough Penn Central track. At Alton, the first stop, we moved onto the former main line of the GM&O. From this point north the track was cleared for 100 mph. The Turbo was now able to show some of its stuff and soon was riding steadily and comfortably alongside Interstate 55 at 80 plus, passing every rubber-tired vehicle in sight.

Satisfied that the Turbo was in good hands up ahead, I went to the buffet car for breakfast. The buffet section took care of 24 people at six tables, with normal passenger seating in the rest of the car. This was strictly airline cuisine, economy class. I selected a tray of pre-cooked bacon and eggs from a glass cabinet, handing it to a red-jacketed Amtrak attendant who heated the food in a microwave oven. The service lacked the dash of the diner on the BROADWAY LIMITED the next morning. But it seemed adequate if you consider the limitations of providing hot meals on a five-car unit train. Furthermore the eggs were good, the coffee fine, and the bill modest.

After breakfast I took a walk through the train but noted few on-board traces of the Turbo's Gallic origins. On the back of each seat there was a small net for storing personal items en route, not a convenience found in the average American coach. French words have been replaced with English, although "Securite" appears on the main exit doors (denoting that the glass is shatter-proof). The soap dispensers in the washrooms, at least the one I checked, carried the initials "SNCF" of the French National Railways. But that was about it. The new trainsets will be even more Americanized and in time the casual traveler may not recognize them as imported products.

I returned to the buffet car for another cup of coffee and sat down with the Turbo's conductor and trainman as they relaxed between stops. Both were railroaders of more than 30 years' experience and recent alumni of the GM&O. They had found the train difficult to work at first, they said, mainly because they weren't familiar with it. But they liked the Turbo now and felt the passengers did too.

"They run this train with a crew of three in France, " the conductor told me. "We have seven men on here today, the operating crew of four and three with Amtrak. In France, they don't check tickets on the train the way we do. Over there you turn your ticket in at your destination. They don't use firemen either, but they have a much more protected right-of-way. With all our crossings we have to be on the lookout all the time."

Because I had heard that Turbo passengers had objected to riding backward when all the forward seats were taken, I had asked whether this was still a customer relations problem.

"Not now," they said. "Everybody seems to be used to it. It won't make much difference in the future anyway. The new trains coming over will just be shells. American reversible seats will be installed when they get here. The doors between the cars are also pretty stiff. We think that can be taken care of in the new equipment."

Both men said they had to stretch Amtrak's passenger rules on occasion. For example, the book says that no standees or metal backpacks are allowed on the Turbos.

"We just can't leave a lot of kids with backpacks on the platform in Chicago, so we take them along. It doesn't hurt the train any," they said. "As for standees, what do you do if you're the last train out and all the seats are taken? We squeeze them in. We don't leave anybody behind if we can help it."

Shortly before our arrival in Springfield (on time at 9:16 am) they left to look after passengers leaving or boarding the train at the state capital and I

went back to my seat. A little north of Springfield we were again moving along smartly when the trainman came by, tapped me on the shoulder and asked me if I'd like to see the Turbo's rear cab, or more accurately the south cab on this northbound double-ended train.

"We can't stay too long," he said, "since I get off at Bloomington when we change crews. But I thought you'd be interested." I was.

He unlocked the door to the cab and a narrow passageway took us past the rear engine room. One turbine at each end of the train generates power for the Turbo's electrical systems, while a main propulsion unit adjoins it. The passageway opened up into the cab itself, the windshields offering a panoramic view of the rapidly receding Illinois landscape. I sat in the engineer's chair in front of the main instrument panel, watching the ICG rails converging in the distance and aware that even here we could talk in conversational tones. The main sound was the clack of the trucks on the rail joints below us. On the instrument panel, the speedometer registered zero.

"It doesn't work going this way," the trainman said. "She's really pushing 83 or 84 right now. That means we're using more fuel than we need to. At 90 she goes into high and the fuel consumption drops way down. This is good conventional track and the ICG keeps it up. But we have 400 grade crossings between St. Louis and Chicago if you count all the farm access roads. This cuts our speed. That whistle is going all the time. Of course he can stop her in a hurry. The brakes are very good, both disc and air. The trains also had magnetic brakes when they arrived in Chicago. The only problem was they were so powerful they popped spikes right out of the ties. We couldn't use them. You dead man's control is right there in the two pedals at your feet. The engineer has to keep working the pedals all the time to keep the power on. This train is very light compared to what we're used to. Weighs about as much as two diesels."

I asked about accidents. "Well with all these crossings you can't be too careful. The engineer and fireman don't have the protection in this cab they have in a diesel, if we hit anything big like a truck or a trailer. We sideswiped a truck that was parked too close to the track a while ago, but the damage wasn't too bad. And some kids piled a lot of rocks between the rails which knocked a valve off underneath one car. We patched it up and kept going. There hasn't been much down time with these trains. If this line were still double-tracked the way the GM&O had it for many years, before they took up one track to save money, we could have quite a passenger service between St. Louis and Chicago these days. But even with passing tracks it's a good operation."

We stayed on in the cab for a bit longer. It was like being in a round end observation car and I was reluctant to leave. But when we started to slow down for our arrival in Bloomington it was time to go.

At Bloomington, the division point, the trainman and I parted company. He and the conductor were scheduled to join a southbound Turbo to St. Louis the next day. At Bloomington we picked up more passengers, as well as the new train crew, moved north again to hit Joliet on schedule, reaching Union Station in Chicago exactly when we were supposed to: 12:24pm. As far as timekeeping was concerned, the Swiss Railways could have done no better.

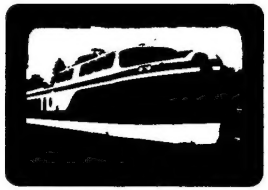
Before boarding the BROADWAY LIMITED that afternoon I had a few hours to think over the trip on the Turbo. The train was comfortable and as fast as track conditions permitted. But certainly its power and speed had not been taxed. On improved trackage over the whole distance between the two cities, the 5-hour ride could be done in much less time.

The air conditioning never failed us. The crew aboard was courteous and friendly, like their work and the equipment they were assigned to. I had enjoyed a good pre-cooked breakfast, as good as any airline would have provided. As a one-class, intermediate range train, the Turbo had done its job well, at least for me. In my view, the French have provided one effective answer to Amtrak's requirements for corridor service, and I am glad to see Amtrak taking advantage of it.

As a Californian I can't help speculating about the potential use of Turbos on the Valley run between Oakland and Bakersfield, or in the Oakland - Sacramento and San Diego - Los Angeles corridors.

It's not generally a good idea to extrapolate a whole trend from a single experience. But I would hazard the guess that in the Turbo the French have given us something equally as good, maybe a little more practical, than what they export to us from Burgundy or Bordeaux. As my friend the trainman said on the way to Bloomington, "it's a good operation."

11: INCIDENT AT PINE ORCHARD



by Ken Maylath

There's a certain routine quality about travel in the Northeast Corridor. This may explain the little publicity it gets relative to its scope.

An exception to the rule is the UA Turbo. It's all the more unique now that the manufacturer has dropped plans to build more of them, given Amtrak's preference for the French version. As I left Baltimore on a Saturday afternoon one of two main thoughts was to ride the UA version again on the New York-Boston run.

The PATRIOT from Baltimore to New York was typical Corridor; GG-1, several well filled coaches (a couple with marginal air conditioning) ex-UP lunch counter car with tables at one end serving snack fare, and parlor. No problems and an essentially on time performance all the way, with arrival in Penn Station to the minute.

At last the gate on track 5 opened for the 6:40 departure of train 152, the YANKEE CLIPPER. I made sure to be one of the first down the stairs when the departure sign was posted to guarantee a choice dome seat up front right behind the engineer's compartment. A fairly decent crowd climbed in for a Saturday night when there's no Hartford connection out of New Haven, and considering that local travel between New York and New Haven isn't allowed. First stop, Old Saybrook, CT.

The journey began beautifully as we departed on time, slipped under the East River, over the Hell Gate Bridge, and onto the ex-New Haven main line from Grand Central at New Rochelle. It was dusk as we eased to a halt at the home town of Yale in 1 hr. 22 min. That's quite good out of Penn Station, and gave us extra minutes to switch engineer and fireman before our 8:08 departure.

It happened about 15 minutes or 10 miles out of New haven as we bore down on the little community of Pine Orchard. No regularly-scheduled trains stop there now--not since the demise of the New London-New Haven "Clamdigger" RDC run in 1972. But...

The pronounced roar and whine of the engines, so prominent when riding upstairs on the UA trains, died away. The stream of cool air from the air conditioning vent ceased, the light flickered out to be replaced by the dim emergency lighting. We were coasting. Knowing of the Pine Orchard station with its modest platform, the engineer decided that it would be a good stopping point. With no engine noise, the most obvious sound was a wavering tone from the engineer's compartment--a trouble alarm. Yes, there was indeed trouble.

It has been standard practice for UA Turbos to carry a troubleshooter on each trip. The youngish bearded chap filling that role on #152 was in the rear when it happened. Quickly he arrived at the front dome, checked a few things, then headed outside for a look in the engine compartment. Within 15 to 20 minutes the scope of our problem was clear. 1. Transmission fluid was leaking, and when it reached a critical level the engines automatically shut down. 2. Repairs were not about to be made without additional help. 3. It was time to think about alternate arrangements for the passengers. The troubleshooter noted that unless the drive shaft was disconnected--a job for the people at the Turbo maintenance center at Providence--we couldn't be towed at speeds over 10mph.

Until Amtrak a train leaving N.Y. for Boston on Saturday night between 6 and 7pm would have been the last one of the night and the problem of what to do with the passengers would have been considerable. Now the MERCHANT's is due out of Penn Station at 7:55 and was still some distance behind us. When it became obvious that we were going nowhere fast, the engineer activated his cab radio and raised New Haven. The message: Completely disabled, will need a light engine and will have to transfer passengers to #178. The words was duly relayed to the dispatcher and the diesel unit which was to be coupled on to the MERCHANT's in New Haven--taking over from electric power. Nothing to do now but wait for nearly an hour until rescued.

From a railroading point of view it would not be especially difficult. The last westbound passenger train, due in New Haven at 9, passed as our plight was being evaluated. A following freight was stopped at Old Saybrook, about 22 miles away. There was an interlocking a mile or so back toward New Haven where #178 could be crossed over and brought alongside.

A man from New London was taking his young son for a long-postponed first train ride. It was certainly postponed to a most interesting time. A rail enthusiast up front passed the time by explaining Turbo operation to some of the passengers.

Further radio conversation revealed that the MERCHANT's was virtually on time into New Haven. Due out at 9:35, it would reach us shortly before 10---about 90 minutes after our breakdown, and at the approximate time we should have been saying goodby to Providence. At 9:45 the train crew (which had given the passengers acequate information on the PA system) asked that we start unloading. There were no lights except flashlights, but things went smoothly enough. A wait of several minutes in the pleasant evening air, then, a signal light down the track flicked from yellow to red and the distant roar of a diesel could be heard. In a few more moments, the glare of #178's headlight, exclamations of relief from the waiting crowd, and it was time to be on our way.

Saturday, at 8pm, is not the most popular travel time between New York and Boston, so the several coaches of the MERCHANT's were lightly patronized with plenty of room for the unscheduled addition to its load. All cars were refurbished---usual on the run except in times of heaviest travel. At 10:12 we moved away after the careful transfer process, apparently leaving only the engineer behind to "watch the store" and wait for help.

We clicked right along with no problems, arriving at South Station minutes before 1am. I lost little time in heading across the street to a hotel also used by the PC to put up its crews. Several crew members from the MERCHANT's were there shortly after me.

It's rather disconcerting to have a scheduled 4-hour trip stretch to about 6 hours. Yet, the situation was handled quite smoothly under the circumstances. The engineer (a veteran who started out firing steam) stopped at a point where the transfer was easier than it could have been. The train crew told the passengers what was happening. They did right things to solve the situation as quickly as possible. This helped to keep the passengers calm and collected.

The "incident at Pine Orchard" is also an indication of the assorted problems which have dogged the UA Turbos since their introduction. It certainly enhances Amtrak's choice of French Turbos and their nearly 100% reliability. Let us hope that the coming Americanization of the design is as reliable as the original.

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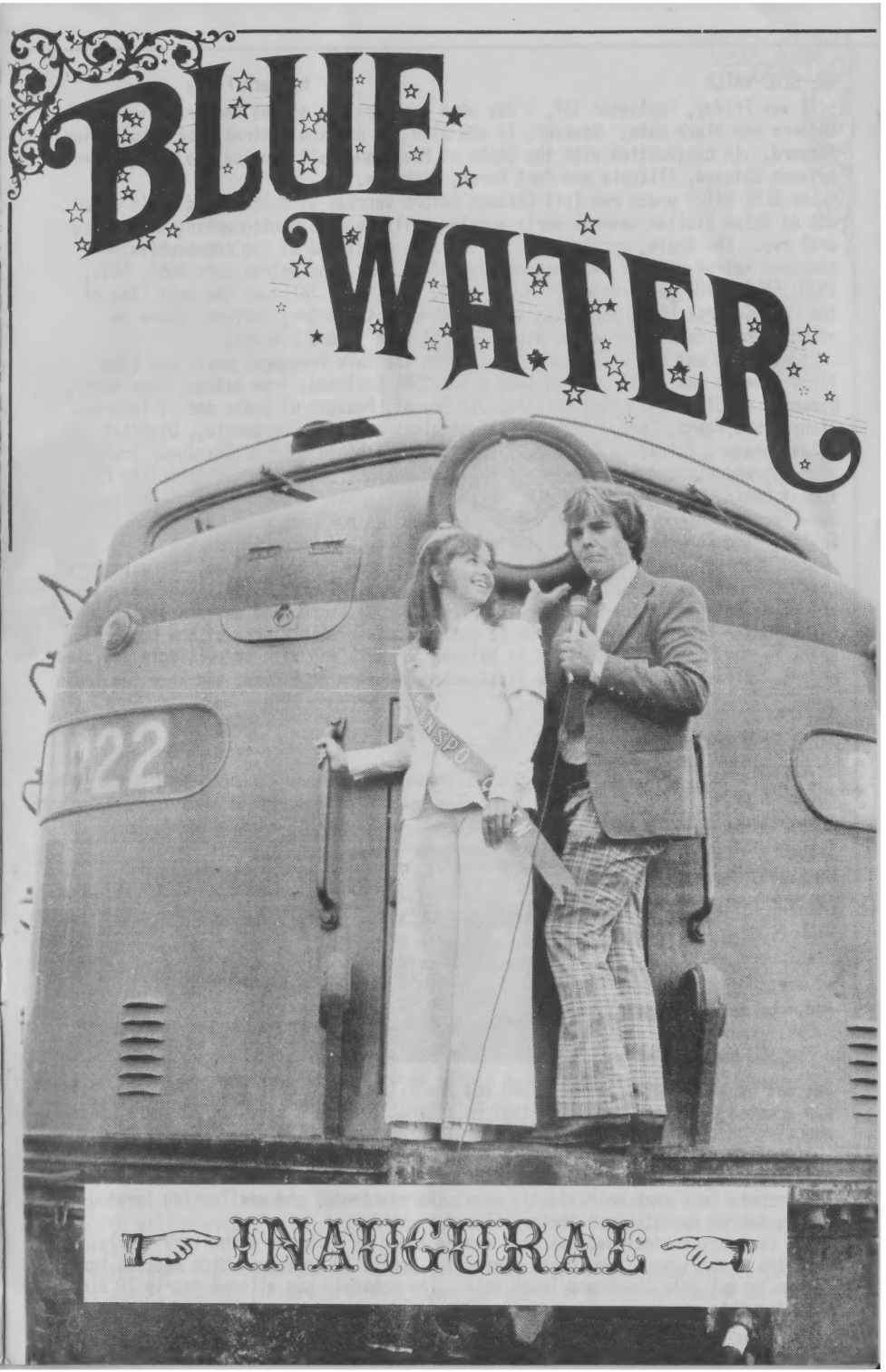

THE BLUE WATER by Jack Ferry

It was Friday, September 13th, a day when many people stayed indoors, avoided ladders and black cats. However, it was also the day that Amtrak took a bold step forward. In conjunction with the State of Michigan, rail service was inaugurated between Chicago, Illinois and Port Huron, Michigan.

The BLUE WATER press run left Chicago before sunrise at 6:35am, and as it eased out of Union Station several early morning railfans were photographing this inaugural run. The train, spotless inside and out, consisted of two consecutively-numbered Amtrak-painted E-8 locomotives (322 & 323), and Amtrak cars 6053, 5415, 3920, 6433, 3406 pub-lounge, 6448 and 6421. The train followed the main line of the Penn Central (PRR) thru Chicago's south side to Porter, Indiana, where we switched over to the former Michigan Central line toward Detroit.

Dignitaries and officials aboard the train for this inaugural press run (the first revenue run would come on Sunday the 15th) included, from Amtrak, Dave Watts, Director of State and Local Affairs; Jim Bryant, Manager of Radio and TV Information; Bruce Heard, Senior Analyst - Timetables; and Gene Glendenning, District Sales Manager, Chicago. Kevin McKinney of the Michigan DOT and Passenger Train Journal, and Richard Tower, also of the Michigan DOT, Dave Ingles, Associate Editor of Trains magazine, William C. Harsh, Jr., Transportation Writer of Chicago Sun-Times, Arthur Dubin, passenger train historian and author of "More Classic Trains," and Rogers Whitaker of the New Yorker magazine were aboard.

At 9:05am we eased to an unannounced stop at Three Oaks, Michigan, where we were greeted by nearly 250 enthusiasts and Gov. and Mrs. William G. Milliken. We paused only long enough for the Governor and First Lady to board, and we were moving again.

The former Michigan Central line is not too bad--probably some of the best PC track in the Midwest. Top speed is between 50 and 60mph with surprisingly few slow orders. Niles, Michigan was the first scheduled stop at 9:25am, and here the train

Right, the crowd at Lapeer, Michigan. Photo on page 13: Transpo Queen with inaugural train at Flint, Michigan. All photos by Jack Ferry. See also cover photo of first revenue run.

was met by another impressive crowd and the Niles High School Band. Governor Milliken greeted everyone, admitting that he had not been on a train in 20 years, but announcing that he would be a frequent train rider now.

After a stop at Kalamazoo where the Governor detrained, our next crowd appeared at Battle Creek. The train uses the PC depot, and here the crews change. The Grand Trunk crews were very enthusiastic about the new train, and are looking forward to having Amtrak operate over their railroad.

The ceremonies concluded, we were moving again by 11:55am, altho very slowly. Here the train leaves the PC and there is a series of switches which must be hand-thrown to get onto the Grand Trunk main. The schedule has allowed nearly 20 minutes for this maneuver. Once on the GTW, the track seemed not as good as expected

--with 60mph top speed. Since Grand Trunk discontinued passenger service, it is storing freight cars on the double-tracked main line.

The inaugural run remained on time throughout the trip, and in several spots just poked along, since it was running ahead of schedule.

Impressive crowds greeted the train at all the stations along the Grand Trunk, enthusiastically welcoming Amtrak to their city.

The State of Michigan has set aside $4 million this year for the upgrading of rail passenger service. Of that sum, $1 million has been allocated for track and signal upgrading. Track work on the BLUE WATER route will include realignment of tracks at Port Huron for a new station, and the building of a connection at Battle Creek. Also under construction is centralized traffic control for a segment of GTW tracks in the Lansing and Flint areas. When completed, these improvements are expected to cut 45 minutes from the train's initial schedule. The Michigan DOT hopes to have a second train on this route within 6-10 months, with an extension into Canada for service to Toronto.

We slowly entered Port Huron (photo above), passed the Grand Trunk yards and the now-abandoned depot to the site of the new Amtrak station several blocks away. A trailer serves as the ticket office, but a new modular station is under construction. It will have a 40-seat waiting room, and will feature a clerestory roof which will provide "natural lighting and ventilation" (meaning no air conditioning).

Two days later (see cover photo) the first revenue run left Chicago with a consist of one PC engine, PC unrefurbished snack bar coach from the Northeast Corridor, and 3 refurbished Amtrak coaches. Detroit train equipment is pooled with that of the BLUE WATER.

mixed train of thoughts

THE AUTUMNAL EQUINOX is upon us--balmy Indian Summer days followed by days on end of chilly, gray fog. Amtrak's fall timetables are out (besides those listed in the last issue, Amtrak issued one for the Port Huron train, entitled "THE SAINT CLAIR, THE WOLVERINE, THE BLUE WATER." The complete system timetable will not have a Sept. 15 issue, nor will the Northeast schedule and the New England Inland Route Schedule; these will be out Oct. 27, when the country turns back the clock an hour to Standard Time (Standard Time will remain in effect until the end of February this year). Looking the new skeds over, one finds some changes not reported here yet: the COAST STARLIGHT now makes a stop at Orland, CA; it and the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR now stop at Martinez, CA. The MOUNT RAINIER now stops at East Olympia, WA. The EXPO 74 has completed its season and is no more. The Seattle-Minneapolis portion of the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA route is now cut back again to tri-weekly for a time. The Boston-Harrisburg train will run all winter instead of being discontinued in September. The NATIONAL LIMITED sked has warnings that the train is subject to delay between Columbus and Kansas City. Reports tell us the train has been arriving in K.C. and in N.Y. and D.C. 3-4 hours late because of delays on PC in Indiana. The MONTREALER now makes a flag stop at Northampton, MA, and the St. Lambert, Quebec stop is eliminated. THE CHESAPEAKE (train 167) makes daily stops at Capital Beltway at 9:59pm, arriving Washington at 10:15pm. Service to the new Poinciana, FL station began on Sept. 15.....

* * *

CANADIAN RAIL UNIONS, a group representing 80,000 workers, was to begin new contract negotiations Sept. 19 with Canada's major railways..... LAS VEGAS MONORAIL got an okay from city commissioners so Rohr Corporation can look for private financing for the enterprise..... GASOLINE PRICES WILL go to 83¢ a gallon by 1980, predicts a Ford Motor Co. official..... THE SAN JOAQUIN topped all Amtrak trains in patronage as a percentage of available seats, an Associated Press release told the nation in mid-month. It had 76.6% occupancy, with next highest the SOUTHWEST LIMITED, with 65.3%. Amtrak put back the hot food on the train after complaints by citizens and Congressmen. Amtrak decided that since 3 men had to work the food car they could jolly well dish up some hot food for patrons..... SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COUNTIES are working on legislation to get up to 2 daily commuter trains in each direction on the SAN DIEGAN route..... CHICAGO & NORTH WESTERN predicts that its commuter profits will triple this year, to over $2 million..... A TREMENDOUS EXPLOSION shook SP's Houston yard Sept. 21, apparently caused by leaking gas from tank car during coupling. About 100 persons were injured, a huge fire set, and buildings a mile away damaged..... FOUR AMTRAK TRAINS in Illinois, the BLACK HAWK, ILLINOIS ZEPHYR, STATEHOUSE, and ILLINI got hot food service in mid-September instead of only cold sandwiches, at the request of the subsidizing state of Illinois ..... MAKE A CORRECTION in the last issue: the new streetcars being built for San Francisco and Boston are the first new cars built here since 1952, not since 1934 (it was 1934 that PCC car development was completed). Either car 1034 or 1040 on the S.F. Muni was the last car actually built in the U.S..... SEATTLE'S AMTRAK MANAGER was in Boise in mid-month to check out details about resumption of passenger service. The train will probably not be a Portland-Boise stub, but rather a Portland-Boise-Pocatello-Ogden run, with initial linkup to the SFZ at Ogden (this would increase the running time 3-4 hrs over the old CITY OF PORTLAND which used the Oregon Short Line via Kemmerer to junction with the main UP line at Granger, WY ..... AMTRAK HAS SIGNED a new contract with Burlington Northern and the Milwaukee Road which should improve performance by granting the roads bonuses for clean, well-functioning trains and on-time performance. At the same time it cuts the basic fee paid the railroads. Amtrak is still bargaining with other roads on the same type of agreement.....

$2-MILLION DAMAGE SUIT has been filed against Amtrak and Penn Central for an elderly couple and other passengers aboard the BROADWAY LIMITED July 21 who allegedly got food poisoning in the diner (see this column, 2nd Aug. Issue). The couple are Mr. & Mrs. Michael Kelrich of Los Angeles. Mr. Kelrich, 72, was reported in critical condition in an Evanston, IL hospital. Amtrak instituted stricter kitchen conditions after the incident. An FDA investigation reportedly failed to link the couple's illness with the food served on the train, however..... THE PANAMA LIMITED was delayed at Chicago on Sept. 13 until 7:30pm because of a freight collision on the ICG at Kensington..... AMERICAN FREEDOM TRAIN is having problems: General Motors, Pepsi-Cola and other big corporate backers of the independent organization to operate the Bicentennial train have taken over its operations in what was termed a "major shake-up." Among the FREEDOM TRAIN's problems are the possibility that diesel power may have to be used in place of the two NKP steam locomotives previously announced.....

* * *

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE pop music critic Ralph Gleason wrote of riding the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR and BROADWAY LIMITED in his Sept. 22 column ("an experience I will never forget"), and ran into Nelson Riddle on the BROADWAY, who promptly chided him for a bad review he got some years back. Gleason's SFZ broke apart somewhere between Denver and Lincoln after "we whipsawed across the U.S. like a couple of bags of laundry in the back of a pickup truck"..... SECRETARY OF INTERIOR is threatening to stop work on the National Visitor Center in Washington Union Station unless the dispute between Amtrak and the railroads there is settled..... AMTRAK'S FUNDING BILL for Fiscal 1975, now being worked on in Congress, includes a number of important features. It reduces the amount states must pay from 2/3 to 1/3 for initiating local service under Section 403-B, and Amtrak cannot deny such service on the basis of claimed equipment shortages (an unidentified Amtrak official said this month: "We have no equipment shortage; we're just facing a bad-order ratio no one railroad ever had to cope with"); Amtrak must order new equipment for such service if necessary, and $10 million is authorized for just that in Fiscal 75. Amtrak must by next July 1 designate a 100-300 mile route between a major city and a "heavily used recreation area" and run trains on it at least 2 years, and then add another "recreational route" each year. Eight million bucks are authorized to study the long-discussed West Coast high-speed line from Mexico to Canada. A study of high-speed rail links to airports must be done by next July 1; and a plan for linking up rapid transit systems and Amtrak trains will be carried out in Washington DC and in at least 3 other rail terminals. It includes other features mentioned in these pages earlier, such as the requirement that all 48 contiguous states have Amtrak service; and it authorizes a $60,000 salary for the Amtrak president to help in recruiting a new one. The Senate has passed this bill and sent it to a House-Senate conference committee..... TEXAS & PACIFIC RAILWAY, a MoPac subsidiary, was not happy to be required to run Amtrak trains between Fort Worth, TX and Texarkana, AR, and it got the ICC to revoke the order. However, Amtrak was permitted to refile its application..... A MIDWESTERN GROUP that has been keeping a count says that the STARLIGHT derailment (see p.3) was Amtrak 35th derailment this year.....

* * *

FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION has been inspecting the ICG's Chicago-New Orleans line, with an engine and two test cars. Work started Sept. 20 and was to continue for a week..... AMTRAK'S BEEN RUNNING full-page newspaper ads in New York state concerning the ADIRONDACK ("Say au revoir to the long drive and take our car any day of the week"). But the big train photo included is not the unusually attractive ADIRONDACK consist, but rather the COAST STARLIGHT in Amtrak stripes alongside Puget Sound.....

SCHEDULED MAILING DATE for this issue has been revised to Sept. 30.

Urban-Suburban Transit

ATLANTIC RICHFIELD COMPANY, the oil outfit, creating a with-it image of supporting environmentally sound transportation, is running a series of full-page newspaper ads asking for ideas for public transportation. The first ad is headed "Wanted: One idea ahead of its time" and asks readers to write to IDEAS, P.O. Box 30169, Los Angeles CA 90030. As an example, it presents a crude sketch of a "never-stop train" on an air-cushioned monorail with moving conveyor belts at a station, from which riders presumably leap onto the slowing train. The next ad presents an idea from a Chicano gentleman for a "190 mph train." Quote: "They are building a 190 mile an hour train in France between Paris and the suburb of Clergy. It runs on a cushio of air that will make it faster and smoother. And I think we should have something like that in our country."

CANADA'S STOL PROJECT (short take-off and landing) between Montreal and Ottawa is proving successful, says Airtransit Canada, so daily flights were increased earlier this month from 15 to 27. And a STOL seaplane, a 20-psgr Twin Otter, on Sept. 23 began regular service Washington-Philadelphia-New York. Fares DC-Philly are $37 one way ($11.75 by Metroliner), $47 DC-NY ($20 Metroliner), and $27 NY-Philly (in Metroliner $10.50). The Washington-NY flight takes 90 minutes.

FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION announced Sept. 20 that it had received a 60-psgr prototype tracked air cushion vehicle manufactured by Rohr Corp. for testing at its Pueblo, CO high speed ground test center. Canada's LRC train (see last issue) is also due to be tested there soon.

4000 PEOPLE DIE yearly from automobile-caused air pollution, a National Academy of Sciences study reported this month. And 4 million days of work are lost yearly because of smog-caused illness. Meanwhile, General Motors is fighting desperately to eliminate further pollution control and safety devices on its automobiles. Congress has voted to disapprove mandatory seat belt interlock systems on cars, while retaining the 55mph speed limit on a permanent basis.

WALL STREET JOURNAL'S seventh and last transit article (Sept. 27) describes the probable future of urban-suburban transit (see quote, below). Reflecting the DOT line, it calls rail transit systems too expensive for most places, and puts emphasis upon the bus, altho it also stresses streetcar use for a number of cities. It quotes one scientists who was critical of far-out transit designs that will never be useable: "If just one-tenth of the money going into futuristic nonsense were to go into rail research, then we wouldn't find ourselves decades behind other countries in rail transportation. The propagandists say that rail is old-fashioned. But at least the technology is known and can be improved upon without wasting so much money."

THE FORD ADMINISTRATION would veto a bill to provide $600 million in operating subsidies to public transit systems, the head of UMTA told a House committee Sept. 25. The administration prefers its own $11-billion, 6-year transit "package", which, however, will not be worked on by Congress until 1975.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"According to several transportation experts, the automobile will still be king in the year 2000, and the motorist will still get stuck in traffic... Among the more common forms of transit, trolleys, ferries, subways and commuter railroads will be more comfortable and faster than their present-day counterparts, perhaps, but not basically very different. And, in the year 2000, the fastest-growing and most important form of mass transit, according to many transportation experts, is likely to be the lowly bus." --Wall Street Journal, September 27

LETTERS (continued from page 2)

to passengers, leading to both restricted visibility, particularly for standees, and inadequate and uneven ventilation. In contrast, the German M.A.N. articulated city bus was demonstrated recently on AC Transit. Its large windows not only made the bus interior seem much lighter and more pleasant than usual for an AC bus, but the top quarter of each window swung inward, admitting a gentle breeze that reached each passenger equally, while offending no one with a blast of air on the head (it was also quieter). This bus elicited favorable response from both passengers and passers-by. It is assumed that a streetcar, designed along similar lines, and even further emphasizing the favorable features, would generate an even more positive impression.

Finally, there appears to be intangible reasons why people do not like GM buses. The chairperson of the Berkeley Transit Citizen Advisory Committee maintains that the GM buses and AC Transit as a concern lack "style." The buses are not "fun." Others have made comments of similar substance, so this feeling does not appear to be unique. These people do feel that rail vehicles have that missing element of style. They also desire smaller, more open buses for the same reason.

My observations from the Berkeley community lend support to your thesis that this GM bus was designed to irritate passengers and erode support for transit. Also, they support your contention that buses could be more attractive. However, I disagree with your idea for compartmentalizing buses. While people may prefer intimacy in private cars, they may not appreciate this type of intimacy on public buses, where they could easily be terrorized. Open and airy conditions appear to be more desirable features for transit interiors. (Following extensive rail travel in this country and in Europe, however, I do favor compartments in railway coach stock.)

Gregory L. Thompson
Transit Development Project Coordinator

Berkeley, California

Once again Glenn Lee hits the target. Ironically the facts he sets out were just as true some 20 years ago--but no one was listening except for the "railfan fanatics." The few experts crying in the wilderness were drowned out by the roar of engines from Detroit and the babble of the highway lobby in Congress getting their sacred Highway Trust Fund "on the road."

Tragically we are learning the truth of our national transportation folly--the misplaced emphasis on moving vehicles instead of people. Just possibly we may save the day once again in the old American tradition of being "in the nick of time." Having operated PCC cars in Los Angeles back in 1958, I can testify to the soundness of the street railway principle--especially as embodied in the PCC concept. Hopefully the new "light rail vehicles" (space age jargon? Or is "streetcar" just an outdated or dirty word?) will be the equal of the PCC car. At any rate the death of the trolley, by whatever name it comes to be known, is not yet and apparently will not be.

Norman K. Johnson

San Bernardino, California

Glenn Lee is to be congratulated for his fine article on light rail transit systems. It is very discouraging to learn of GM's underhanded manipulation of transit companies, aimed at scrapping the clean and efficient streetcars in favor of their filthy buses. And then on top of that, downgrading bus service to encourage the use of private automobiles. As a result of this manipulation, many officials now consider rails to be obsolete. Our "transit commission" in the Twin Cities turned down a plan to use existing rail for rapid transit. Their idea of mass transit is the inferior bus system combined with a proposed moving "conveyor belt" sidewalk for downtown Minneapolis. They fail to see that the problem is getting from the suburbs to the downtown areas in the first place!

Charles A. Rudisel

White Bear Lake, Minnesota